

dilations; he described improvements in musical instruments; narrated explorations by savants into the domain of natural history; sent descriptions of specimens of architecture; expressed his opinions on statues and paintings, and gave faithful acco'iints of agriculture and mechanical inventions.

Political and social conditions in every country and district he visited found in him the shrewdest observer, and the most painstaking recorder. The highest tribute that can be paid to the correspondence of any man can be paid to that of Jefferson at this period. Most of his letters are fresh and readable even at this day.

Foreign travel taught Jefferson a lesson which it would be well if all American travelers could learn. He was quick to see the excellences of other countries, though not less quick to see their shortcomings. The more he saw of other countries, the more highly he appreciated the superiority of his own. He never ceased to make the abuses of the civilization of Europe, and even of England, a text from which to preach the education of the masses of his own country. This spirit was especially characteristic of his attitude toward France. It must be remembered that he saw that country under conditions never paralleled in the history of the world. From, the meeting of the Assembly of Notables<sup>^</sup> in February, 1787, he followed step by step the follies and defeats of the Crown and Nobility, until he saw armed conflict in the streets of Paris and the fall of the Bastile. In his Memoir, thirty years later, he wrote of these events; and though he had then clearly before him the horrors to which they subsequently led, yet his faith was not shaken in the ultimate good to' humanity that resulted from the Revolution.\*

Notwithstanding his intense interest in passing affairs, Jefferson's conduct as minister was most discreet. Though his house was frequented by men of all shades of opinion, his sense of the duties of an Ambassador did not suffer him to< meddle in any matter which concerned merely the existing institutions of the

\*See French Revolution, page 220.